

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-1-

Chapter 3 - Section 1

The old rule of farmer-hunting was to get up about three o'clock in the morning and get himself a warm breakfast by the fire place, then take his gun and ammunition and walk some miles into the forest. At the break of day, he would be on some distant ridge walking silently along and generally finding a deer just under the crest of the mountain. The deer was shot and toted in and a fair day's work was done on the farm. The next morning the day's program would be the same. An old timer told me that he got eighteen deer this way one fall and was not away from home overnight, and did not miss much time from his farm work.

Mr. Coe Adkison told a story that his grandfather, John E. Adkison, had told him. When he was a young man he said that he had gone out in the morning and seen seven large deer and taken his pick of the lot.

The old time hunter said that, when they went on a hunting trip, they did not expect to kill any deer the first days of the trip, but that the longer they stayed in the woods the more expert they became at seeing deer in their beds. The white horns of the buck was the most unusual glimpse they got of the deer, and the next was the ear of the game. They nearly always shot them as they lay in their beds for the deer once discovered never had a chance

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-2-

for the approach was silent and the hunter came very close before firing. The hunter looked at the game very little, if at all, as he moved forward.

Just at dusk it was still possible to hunt and find the deer up and feeding, but the night comes on very swiftly in the fall of the year, and with the old time hunter the plan changed with the approach of night, for then he moved swiftly and more or less carefully toward his camp, keeping a lookout for deer. The real hunting, however, was in the daytime, when he looked long and carefully at every place in sight where a deer might be lying down. There was no better dress for such hunting than buckskin suits and moccasins.

In the old days there were four recognized methods of deer hunting. Chasing with bounds by which deer were run through stands on streams; whip chasing, by which hunters drove deer through gape in the mountain where a waiting hunter got a shot; still hunting; and walking down. Walking down was during a snow when the hunter camped on the trail and finally overtook the deer and slew it.

John Berlow was the pioneer ancestor of the Berlow connection in Pocahontas County. When Mr. Berlow bought the Brook place, he paid for it in venison at fifty cents a saddle or pair. Mr. Berlow estimated the number of deer killed by him at fifteen hundred. On the most lucky day of all his hunting career, he killed six deer and wounded the seventh.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-3-

He never kept count of the bears, panthers, wildcats, turkeys, and foxes shot by him.

During Mr. Berlow's last days, while kept at home and out of the woods by the infirmities of age, he was asked if he would like to live his life over again. He replied, "I have no wish to live my life over again, but there is one thing I would like to do. That is to have one more good bear hunt on Red Lick Mountain."

It is related that during the fading days of liberty for the hunter, that a West Virginia lawyer was hunting on the waters of Anthony's Creek, and there killed a deer. As he gloats over the trophy, a game warden stepped up out of the brush and arrested him. After talking a while, the two proceeded to butcher the deer. But, before they started to dress the deer, the lawyer persuaded the game warden to hang the deer around his neck so that a Kodak picture could be secured. When that was done, the officer was informed that if any arresting was to be done, the game warden could consider himself under arrest. So they compromised.

The mode of catching game was mainly by snares and steel traps. A bear trap was necessarily made very strong and was difficult to set as were also traps for wolves. One way of trapping a bear was to build a covered pen of strong heavy logs, raising it high enough on one side to admit the bear. This was arranged with a trigger, which the bear threw after entering the pen. Sometimes the bears

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-4-

would gnaw a log off and escape if they were left in too long. A wolf trap was made by building a log pen larger at the bottom and gradually drawing it in. This would enable the wolves to climb up the outside of the pen and jump in. Sometimes an old sheep would be placed in the pen for bait, hence the term wolf bait. Wolves were said to be very fond of horse flesh. Persons trapping for wolves would go a long distance to get the flesh of a dead horse to use either in the trap or for bait in which to place poison. Wolves in traveling would take a straight course. When hunters got the course the wolf was going, it was not difficult to follow.

Jacob Hoover of Elk Mountain in looking over some old papers of his grandfather, the late Capt. J. G. Gay, came across a copy of the Pocahontas Times for August 26, 1886. It was published by Editor J. B. Genfield at Huntersville.

In that paper the bounty on bears was placed at \$4 a head, on wolves, \$15. Only one wolf scalp was proved and that by the late A. M. V. Arbogast. The bears killed that year were about the same as today - 54 head having been proven for a bounty of \$216. Among those who received bounty on bears fifty-four years ago were: James Gibson, three bears; James Sharp, C. C. Arbogast, two bears; C. M. Gum and Harry Garner. The top hunters were A. M. V. Arbogast, three bears and a wolf; A. I. Collins, four bears; James Gibson, three bears.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

-5-

Note by Calvin Price, Editor of Pocahontas Times: Mr. Gibson has gotten his bears regularly before and since 1886, and his notches now number 100.

Andrew Price in 1926 Blue Book
Pocahontas Times for August 1886